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ABSTRACT

This digest focuses on Information Process Recall (IPR), a supervision strategy developed to increase counselor awareness of covert thoughts and feelings and to deepen the therapeutic relationship between the counselor and the client. Steps in conducting IPR are given as a guideline for conducting IPR recall sessions using audio or video tapes. To aid supervisors, a number of questions are suggested. These questions are worded to enhance the supervisees' awareness of their blind spots at their own level of readiness and capability. The digest concludes that IPR provides supervisees with a safe place to examine internal reactions through reexperiencing the counselor-client Contains 6 references. (NB)

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON Counseling And Student Services

ERIC DIGEST

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Interpersonal Process Recall

Craig S. Cashwell

Overview

Some recent models of counseling supervision have tended to be task oriented, emphasizing such competencies as case conceptualization and the attending skills of the counselor. However, attention is also needed to increase counselor self-awareness regarding the therapeutic relationship. Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) is a supervision strategy developed by Norman Kagan and colleagues that empowers counselors to understand and act upon perceptions to which they may otherwise not attend. The goals of IPR are to increase counselor awareness of covert thoughts and feelings of client and self, practice expressing covert thoughts and feelings in the here and now without negative consequences, and, consequently, to deepen the counselor/client relationship.

Discussion

IPR is built around the notion that counselors' selective perceptions of surface issues block their therapeutic efforts more than any other variable (Bernard, 1989). IPR is based on two elements of human behavior: that people need each other and that people learn to fear each other. Kagan (1980) proposed that people can be the greatest source of joy for one another. However, because a person's earliest imprinted experiences are as a small being in a large person's world, inexplicit feelings of fear and helplessness may persist throughout one's life. These fears are most often unlabeled and uncommunicated. This combination of needing but fearing others results in an approach-avoidance syndrome as persons search for a "safe" psychological distance from others. As a result, people often behave diplomatically.

Kagan (1980) believed the "diplomatic" behavior of counselors is expressed in two ways: "feigning of clinical naivete" and tuning out client messages. Feigning clinical naivete, most often an indicant that counselors are unwilling to become involved with clients at a certain level, occurs when counselors act as if they did not understand the meaning behind client statements. Tuning out occurs most often among inexperienced counselors who are engrossed in their own thought process, trying to decide what to do next. The result is that the counselor misses messages from the client, some of which may seem obvious to the supervisor. Thus, a wealth of material in counseling sessions are acknowledged by neither the client nor the counselor. Interactions occur on many levels, but clients and counselors label only a limited range of these interactions (Kagan, 1980). IPR is designed to help counselors become more attuned to dynamics of the counselor/client relationship that they may be missing due to their tendency toward diplomatic behavior.

In IPR, counselors (and sometimes clients) reexperience the counseling session via videotape or audiotape in a supervision session that can be characterized by a supportive and nonthreatening environment. The supervisor functions as a consultant, taking on the role of inquirer during the IPR session. Because the supervisee is considered to be the highest authority about the experiences in the counseling session, the inquirer does not attempt to teach the counselor or ask leading questions (Bernard, 1989), but rather adopts a learning-by-discovery philosophy and functions in an assertive and even confrontive, but nonjudgemental, capacity (Kagan, 1980).

Steps in Conducting IPR

IPR is most often conducted with the counselor alone, but in some instances the inquirer may meet with the counselor and his/her client or with the client alone. Mutual recall sessions often help counselors learn to communicate with clients about the here-and-now of their interaction for future counseling sessions.

The following steps are intended as a guideline for conducting a recall session:

- Review the tape (audio or video) prior to the supervision session. As it is not typically possible to review the entire tape during the recall session, it is important to preselect sections of tape that are the most interpersonally weighted (Bernard & Goodyear, 1992). If it is not possible to preview the tape, ask the supervisee to preselect a section of tape for the recall session.

- Introduce the recall session to the supervisee and create a nonthreatening environment, emphasizing that there is more material in any counseling session than a counselor can possibly attend to, and that the purpose of the session is to reflect on thoughts and feelings of the client and the counselor during the session that will be reviewed.

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- Begin playing the tape; at appropriate points, either person stops the tape and ask a relevant lead (see below) to influence the discovery process. If the supervisee stops the tape, he/she will speak first about thoughts or feelings that were occurring at that time in the counseling session. The supervisor facilitates the discovery process by asking relevant open-ended questions (see below). During thisperiod of inquiry, attend to supervisee's nonverbal responses and process any incongruence between nonverbal and verbal responses.

- During the recall session, do not adopt a teaching style and teach the supervisee about what they could have done differently. Rather, allow the supervisee to explore thoughts and feelings to some resolution (Bernard & Goodyear, 1992). This is often more difficult than it seems.

Recommended Inquirer Leads

Questions can be worded to enhance supervisees' awareness of their blind spots at their own level of readiness and capability (Borders & Leddick, 1987)(e.g., focus on client nonverbals versus counselor's internal reaction to the client). To further an understanding of the inquirer role, the following inquirer leads are provided from various sources (Bernard & Goodyear, 1992; Borders & Leddick, 1987; Kagan, 1980):

- What do you wish you had said to him/her?
- How do you think he/she would have reacted if you had said that?
- What would have been the risk in saying what you wanted to say?
- If you had the chance now, how might you tell him/her what you are thinking and feeling?
- Were there any other thoughts going through your mind?
- How did you want the other person to perceive you?
- Were those feelings located physically in some part of your body?
- Were you aware of any feelings? Does that feeling have any special meaning for you?
- What did you want him/her to tell you?
- What do you think he/she wanted from you?
- Did he/she remind you of anyone in your life?

Conclusion

IPR, then, provides supervisees with a safe place to examine internal reactions through reexperiencing the encounter with the client in a process recall supervision session. IPR also has been shown to be useful in supervisor-supervisee relationships (Bernard, 1989), group supervision (Gimmestad and Greenwood, 1974), and peer supervision (Kagan, 1980).

Research has consistently supported the use of IPR as an effective medium for supervision. For example, Kagan and Krathwohl (1967) and Kingdon (1975) found that clients of counselors being supervised with an IPR format fared better than clients of counselors supervised by other methods. The model has been demonstrated to be effective with experienced counselors, entry-level counselors and paraprofessionals (Bernard, 1989). It is possible, however, to magnify the interpersonal dynamics between the counselor and client to the point of distortion (Bernard and Goodyear, 1992). Thus, IPR is not recommended as the sole approach to supervision. Used effectively and in conjunction with other supervision approaches, IPR provides counselors with the opportunity to confront their interpersonal fears, understand complex counselor/client dynamics, and maximize the interpersonal encounter with their clients (Kagan, 1980).

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